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Dr. Heitkemper received her B.S.N. in 1973 from Seattle University, her R.N. in gerontological nursing from the University of Washington in 1975, and her Ph.D. in physiology and biophysics from the University of Illinois at the Medical Center, Chicago, in 1981. Her research related to women's health, stress, and gastrointestinal function has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 1983. She is the author of two nursing textbooks and approximately 90 data-based papers. In 2003, Dr. Heitkemper received the American Gastroenterological Association/Janssen Award for research in gastroenterology.